

This mysterious allegorical style seems to have been the favourite of the lower classes of the day. The popularity of Langland's * *Piers Plowman*,¹ to which the reference in this rebel song bears further testimony, proves the general appreciation of this sort of writing. 'Piers Plowman' may perhaps be only one characteristic fragment of a medieval folklore of allegory, which expressed for generations the faith and aspirations of the English peasant, but of which Langland's great poem alone has survived. Another of these rebel catchwords purports to come from * Jack the Miller.'

* Jack Mihier asketh help to turn his
niilne aright. He hath grounden small,
small. The King's son of heaven he shall
pay for all. Look thy milne go aright,
with the four sails, and the post stand in
steadfastness. With right and with
might, with skill and with will, let might
help right and skill go before will and
right before might, then goeth our milne
aright. And if might go before right, then
is our milne misadight.' In another piece:
'Jack Trueman doth you to understand
that falseness and guile have reigned too
long.* Lastly, 'John Ball greeteth you well
all and doth you to understand that he
hath rungen your bell.'

The bell was rung at a moment specially propitious for revolt. It seems that riotous resistance to the poll-tax collectors broke out spontaneously in some localities, and was then used by the plotters, who made it the occasion for the intended Bisiiig and great march on London. Heavy taxation had for some years been a general grievance of all classes, as clearly appears from the complaints of the Commons on the part of the laity, and counter-complaints of the chroniclers on the part of the clergy. The complete collapse of the English arms by land and sea made the pressure of taxation heavier for good patriots to bear with patience.² If the battle of the Nile had been lost instead of won, we should probably have heard more about Pitt's income-tax. If John of G-aunt had returned from France, the victor of a second Poitiers, with DuG-uesclin

¹ Knighton, ii. 139.

² The destructive raids of our enemies among the towns and villages of the coast may have been an additional grievance, driving the inhabitants of the distressed districts to revolt against the tax collector. See pp. 55-6 above, B,nd *Edinburgh Review*, Jan. 1900, p. 88.